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December 10, 2009

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Senate Majority Leader  
522 Hart Senate Office Bldg  
Washington, DC 20510

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Speaker Nancy Pelosi  
Office of the Speaker  
H-232, US Capitol  
Washington DC 20515

Re: Uniting American Families Act (S.424, H.R. 1024)

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Speaker Pelosi:

The San Francisco Human Rights Commission urges you to push for the passage of the Uniting American Families Act in the Senate and the House and to ensure that Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) families are included in upcoming Comprehensive Immigration Reform.

The UAFA has the support of the City and County of San Francisco, as well as the San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission. We believe strongly that same-sex binational couples are unfairly discriminated against. LGBT Americans in loving and committed relationships do not have any legal rights to sponsor their partner for a green card; however, heterosexual couples in similar circumstances are afforded this right.

With marriage equality being a reality in 5 states and domestic partnerships or civil unions a reality in others, it is important to note that in the eyes of the federal government, LGBT people are all still legal strangers and do not enjoy any of the benefits at the federal level – immigration sponsorship being one of them.

According to the Williams Institute Report, *Binational Same-sex Unmarried Partners in Census 2000: A demographic portrait*, released in 2005, it is estimated that there are at least 40,000 same-sex binational couples living in the United States that need equal immigration rights. This number, however, does not include couples being forced into exile, couples maintaining a long distance relationship by living in two different countries and couples who did not disclose the nature of their relationship when the Census was taken in 2000.

Approximately 30% of these same-sex binational couples live in the State of California. This is the highest number in the nation.

Both the House and Senate have indicated that "Family Unity" is a core principle in upcoming Comprehensive Immigration Reform and "family reunification" has always been an important principle in our immigration laws. It is therefore very important for Congress to ensure that same-sex binational couples are treated as families, not legal strangers, when Comprehensive Immigration Reform is being introduced and debated.



Senator Reid and Speaker Pelosi, lives are being torn apart everyday, American citizens are being forced to choose between the person they love or the country they love when their partner's visa runs out or they lose their jobs. We need to address this situation now by passing the UAFA and/or making sure that its principle is included in any Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill going forward.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Cecilia Chung".

Cecilia Chung  
Commission Chair